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New York

Chairperson: Mrs. Juul ..... (Norway)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda items 82 to 97 (*continued*)

General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items

The Chairperson: This morning the Committee, in accordance with its programme of work and timetable, will continue with its general debate on all disarmament and related international security agenda items. The first speaker on my list this morning is the distinguished representative of Kazakhstan.

I call on the representative of Kazakhstan.

Mr. Kazykhanov (Kazakhstan): At the outset, let me extend my congratulations to you and the other members of the Bureau on your election to guide the work of the First Committee and express our confidence that under your able stewardship substantive progress will be made in addressing important issues on the agenda of this Committee.

Kazakhstan has consistently called for an enhanced regime to ensure the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. That position is rooted in the sufferings of our people, who are still reeling from the negative effects of the nuclear explosions that occurred at the former Semipalatinsk nuclear test site, which was shut down exactly 15 years ago by decree of President Nursultan Nazarbayev. That position was further supported by my country's historic decision to voluntarily renounce its nuclear arsenal, which was once the fourth-largest in the world.

We hope that that step serves as a positive example in the light of the ongoing major crisis that has struck the global security system. Regrettably, the total lack of results at the most recent Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and in the Disarmament Commission remains a major challenge for the international community. We must stop merely debating whether nuclear disarmament or nuclear non-proliferation is more important. It is time to take coordinated efforts to overcome this crisis. Real progress is possible if all Member States fulfil their obligations with regard to nuclear disarmament and the prevention of vertical and horizontal proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

We have already made a good start. The Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia, signed on 8 September 2006 in Semipalatinsk, is a demonstration of political will on the part of five Central Asian States — Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The signing of that landmark instrument could serve as catalyst for the process of enhancing the NPT. The Central Asian States are ready to continue consultations with the permanent members of the Security Council on the issue of the Treaty's entry into force.

I should like to take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation and gratitude to all the Member States, international bodies and non-

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governmental organizations that have warmly congratulated us on our decision to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. As they noted, that event represents a new and positive step towards the objective of the total and complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

It is all the more surprising, then, that the signing of the Treaty — which is one of the most important developments in recent years in the area of non-proliferation — was not even mentioned in the opening statement made to the Committee by the Department for Disarmament Affairs.

We urge the Governments of those States that have not yet signed or ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) to display political will and genuine commitment regarding nuclear disarmament. States should reaffirm their commitment to a moratorium on nuclear-test explosions and work to ensure the entry into force of the CTBT.

Kazakhstan shares the view that it is necessary to comply strictly with the provisions of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) on weapons of mass destruction. We must intensify our efforts to enhance national export-control mechanisms, particularly with regard to dual-use materials and technologies, as well as missiles and other means of delivery of weapons of mass destruction and man-portable defence systems.

Having joined the club of global space Powers, Kazakhstan reaffirms its commitment to preventing the placement of nuclear weapons in outer space and welcomes the adoption of the International Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation.

It is a matter of great concern that the crisis in the sphere of disarmament has extended not only to strategic weapons, but also to conventional weapons. Regrettably, Member States have so far failed to devise common approaches to the Programme of Action on Small Arms. The international community should work tirelessly to combat illegal trafficking in conventional arms. Kazakhstan calls on States to renew their commitment to strictly implement the Programme of Action and the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons.

It is necessary to continue negotiations within the United Nations in order to draft legally binding international instruments to combat the illicit trafficking in conventional weapons and ammunition and to ensure effective monitoring of and compliance with United Nations arms embargoes.

Achieving global security and disarmament would hardly be possible without appropriate measures to strengthen regional security. In June, the Asian countries members of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-building Measures in Asia (CICA) held the second CICA summit at Almaty. Leaders of the 18 Asian States attending discussed recent regional and global developments and adopted the summit's Declaration. They also signed an agreement on the CICA secretariat, which will be important for the future activities of the Conference. The CICA process undoubtedly strengthens stability and confidence-building measures in Asia, in the interests of the prosperity and sustainable development of our countries.

The possibility that weapons of mass destruction could fall into the hands of terrorists is a matter of grave concern. In that context, Kazakhstan supports further universalization and enhancement of counter-terrorism treaty mechanisms. We look forward to the early completion of a comprehensive convention against international terrorism.

Kazakhstan commends the launching of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and believes that international cooperation to fight terrorism should be developed in full conformity with the provisions of the United Nations Charter and norms of international law.

Finally, I would like once again to assure you, Madam Chairperson, that we will fully support all efforts by the Committee to adopt decisions that will strengthen the non-proliferation regime and will promote security at the regional and global levels. My delegation stands ready to work together to achieve our common goals.

Mr. Malmierca Díaz (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Permit me at the outset to congratulate you, Madam, on your election as Chairperson of the First Committee and to congratulate the other members of the Bureau.

Cuba fully supports the statement made in this debate by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). That statement reflects the principled positions and priorities in the area of disarmament and security adopted by the

Movement's heads of State or Government at the Summit held successfully in Havana from 11 to 16 September this year. At the Havana Summit, the leaders of the 118 NAM member States agreed to promote those positions and priorities in the relevant international forums. Cuba will work actively in the First Committee, together with the rest of the NAM countries, to carry out that mandate.

The constant increase in military expenditures is worrisome, mainly in the light of the dizzying growth of the super-Power's military budget and its increasingly obvious hegemonism, unilateralism and direct or covert interventionism, along with the resulting insecurity felt by the weakest countries and the attempt to justify the doctrine of the pre-emptive use of force.

One country, the United States, spends as much on weapons as the rest of the world put together, and United States companies produce 60 per cent of all weapons sold on the planet. How much progress could be made if only a minute portion of the more than $1 trillion currently devoted to military expenditures were used to find solutions to the problems associated with underdevelopment and to reduce the gap between the richest and the poorest countries? With the resources currently devoted to armaments, the 852 million people suffering from hunger throughout the world could be fed for a year or 38 million of those affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic could be provided with medication for 40 years. The Millennium Development Goals could be achieved with only 10 per cent of the current military expenditures.

Cuba reiterates its proposal to devote at least half of current military expenditures to meet the needs of economic and social development through a fund managed by the United Nations.

Despite the proclaimed end of the cold war, there are currently around 33,000 nuclear weapons in the world, more than 13,000 of them ready for immediate use. Nuclear weapon modernization programmes have not stopped.

The only safe and effective way to avoid the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is their total elimination. The mere existence of nuclear weapons and doctrines that prescribe their possession and use puts international peace and security at risk. For this reason, Cuba ratifies the historic position of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) that nuclear disarmament is, and should continue to be, the highest priority in the area of disarmament.

Nuclear-weapon States are legally bound not only to pursue in good faith, but also to bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament under strict and effective international control. Cuba rejects the selective implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Issues pertaining to nuclear disarmament and the peaceful use of nuclear energy cannot continue to be disregarded while priority is given to horizontal non-proliferation. We strongly support the inalienable right of States to the peaceful use of nuclear energy, with strict observance of commitments under the NPT.

Turning to conventional weapons, we consider that this Committee should review in depth and adopt real steps to prevent certain countries from continuing to develop and use increasingly more sophisticated and deadly weapons, which cause "collateral damage", a phrase behind which some countries try to hide their innocent victims.

The situation of the multilateral disarmament and arms control machinery is increasingly worrisome — the Disarmament Conference remains at a standstill. Every year, the First Committee adopts draft resolutions that are seldom honoured or implemented, particularly those pertaining to nuclear disarmament. The 2005 World Summit could not even express a position on the question of disarmament. The 2005 NPT Review Conference was a failure. The 2006 Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects could not agree upon a final document. In view of such realities, Cuba considers it urgent to hold a fourth Special Session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. In this regard, we support the reactivation as soon as possible of the Open-ended Working Group to prepare that fourth special session.

To attribute the lack of concrete results on disarmament to a lack of effectiveness in the working methods of the bodies that deal with disarmament issues, including the First Committee, would be a simplistic and distorted vision of reality. The main difficulties that the disarmament machinery faces do not lie in the higher or lower effectiveness of its working methods, but rather in political reasons,

particularly the lack of political will by certain powerful States, especially the military super Power, to advance in the issue that is of key relevance for international peace and security: the question of nuclear disarmament.

Cuba supports the greatest possible improvement of the working methods of all organs of the United Nations, including the First Committee, as long as this is not carried out at the expense of the right of all Member States to promote and uphold their legitimate interests, and as long as the key role of the General Assembly within the Organization is not affected, but is rather strengthened.

I would like to conclude by reaffirming that the Cuban delegation will make its best efforts to attain relevant practical results at this session of the First Committee.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is my pleasure to congratulate you, Madam, on your election as Chairperson of the First Committee. My congratulations also go to the other members of the Bureau. I would like to align myself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

The First Committee is meeting against a complex international backdrop marred by feelings of mistrust and uncertainty. Some countries, on the basis of their military or economic power, believe that the rules of disarmament and the achievement of international security do not apply to them or to their allies, while the overwhelming majority believe that these rules apply to all without exception: nuclear and non-nuclear States, and large producers and small consumers of conventional weapons, irrespective of their level of military or economic progress.

This climate explains the failure of the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), followed by the failure of the 2005 World Summit to agree on a disarmament section for its Outcome Document, the inability of the Disarmament Commission in 2006 to agree on the referral of a number of working documents to the 2007 session, the failure of the United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, and the failure by the Conference on Disarmament even to agree on a substantive report at its 2006 session.

This ongoing discord affects the entire multilateral disarmament machinery. It reflects a clear pattern of substantive imbalance that in turn raises questions about the causes behind that clear pattern impeding the work of the international disarmament machinery. It also raises questions about the deliberate intention of some parties to frustrate the multilateral disarmament machinery. Is it their objective to evade their clear obligations in the framework of the existing nuclear disarmament machinery and attempt to replace this with other machinery outside the United Nations serving the particular security objectives of some parties? In the same category are the non-proliferation initiatives and codes of conduct that some are trying to impose through the Security Council but outside the framework of international conventions.

We are currently witnessing the gravest sign of the collapse of the non-proliferation regime established by the NPT. That regime was based on the commitment by the nuclear-weapons States to achieve nuclear disarmament within a specified time frame, under effective international control, in return for the commitment by non-nuclear States to make full use of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy without proceeding to the production of nuclear weapons. In our view, the peaceful use of nuclear power is the inalienable right of all parties to the NPT.

The NPT thus faces a real threat as a result of some of the intransigent positions that are being taken. Those positions must be modified. First, the evasion by the nuclear-weapons States of their commitment to eliminate nuclear weapons in accordance with article VI of the Treaty and their failure to take the 13 verifiable steps for nuclear disarmament in a multilateral, international framework, including the activation of the disarmament machinery of the Conference on Disarmament, the conclusion of an international convention on fissile materials in a verifiable international framework that deals with existing stockpiles and prohibits future production, and the ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and its entry into force. All those steps were agreed to by consensus by the nuclear-weapon States at the 2000 NPT Review Conference.

Second, the desired balance has not been struck between disarmament and non-proliferation.

There is a lack of commitment to the clear priorities that have governed the work of the United Nations in the field of disarmament. There is an attempt to replace those priorities bilaterally and outside the multilateral framework.

Thirdly, the nuclear Powers have not honoured their commitment to support and assist other States parties to the Treaty in the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. They have portrayed some attempts to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes as a first step in the production of nuclear weapons; that is based on arbitrary assumptions and is not supported by any concrete evidence.

Fourthly, there has been a failure to exert real efforts to achieve the universality of the Treaty. This universality is the only guarantee of its continued existence and of the stability of the Treaty regime. Here, the foremost failure is the lack of implementation by the depositary States of their commitment to the special resolution on the Middle East adopted as an integral part of the 1995 decision on the indefinite extension of the Treaty and the relevant paragraphs of the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference.

At the same time, some nuclear Powers continue to support States that are not parties to the Treaty and that have acquired or are exchanging information about acquiring nuclear weapons, in clear contravention of their commitment to work to cause those States to adhere to the Treaty as non-nuclear-weapon States.

Fifthly, there are double standards in dealing with States' obligations in the area of disarmament, nuclear disarmament in particular, on the basis of political, ideological and sometimes religious considerations. This weakens the legal framework of the obligations of States parties to the NPT.

Based on the aforementioned, Egypt reiterates its rejection of the acquisition of nuclear weapons by Israel, by Iran or by any other State in the Middle East. We repeat the need for a single standard in dealing with questions of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in the Middle East in such a way as to lead to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East in accordance with an effective plan based on Israel's guaranteed adherence to the NPT as a non-nuclear State and the destruction of all its non-peaceful nuclear capabilities. At the same time, such a zone should be based on the guarantee that no State in the region — including Iran, of course — will seek to acquire nuclear weapons. That is the only way to deal with this question within a clear framework that would ensure international security and be based on legality, justice and equality.

The failure last year of collective efforts in the field of disarmament was not confined to nuclear disarmament. It also applied to conventional weapons. The Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons failed as a result of the conflict between the positions of the large producers and those of the small States that suffer greatly from the tragic humanitarian consequences of that illicit trade. Some are now attempting to conclude a treaty to govern the conventional weapons trade, even though the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms has failed to receive voluntary data from Member States. Egypt believes that international efforts must concentrate on underscoring the responsibility of States for the full implementation of the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons at the national level, and the international community's responsibility to provide technical and financial support to States, particularly the developing countries, in implementing the objectives of the Programme of Action, instead of dispersing the international community's efforts in parallel frameworks covering all other conventional weapons. That could erode the current consensus in this regard.

Egypt is ready to join any collective effort to address disarmament questions on a balanced basis, with a view to achieving security for all members of the international community, without exception. It is time to speak frankly about unfortunate international and regional positions that have caused the erosion we have been witnessing. But that requires the participation of all parties, particularly nuclear-weapon States, in designing a new international future based on legality and the rule of law.

Mr. Fissenko (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): I wish, on behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Belarus, to congratulate you, Madam, on your election to the post of Chairperson of the First Committee. You may rely on our support and cooperation.

It is hard to refrain from criticism when speaking about the results of the multilateral forums in the field of international security, arms control and disarmament. We are well aware of the problems

standing in the way of new initiatives, as well as those in the implementation of the treaties that are the foundation of the current international security system.

First of all, I have in mind the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). For Belarus, one of the few countries to voluntarily renounce the opportunity to continue to possess nuclear weapons, the implementation of the NPT continues to be of primary importance. Belarus fully implements its obligations under agreements in this field and has initiated the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central and Eastern Europe.

In this regard, we note with satisfaction the conclusion of the Treaty on the Establishment of a Central Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone. Four out of the five Central Asian States are our partners within the Collective Security Treaty Organization. We welcome this step by our partners, and we support the relevant First Committee draft resolution.

As one of the countries most affected by the Chernobyl disaster, Belarus would like to caution against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons for the settlement of any kind of international dispute; this is absolutely unacceptable. Our position is firm, and we intend to defend it, together with our partners.

During the Non-Aligned Movement Summit in Havana, heads of State confirmed that the issues of nuclear disarmament take high priority. Efforts aimed at nuclear non-proliferation should be undertaken in parallel with efforts at nuclear disarmament and should not conflict with the inalienable right of States to the peaceful use of nuclear energy. As a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, Belarus fully shares the Movement's approach to the disarmament and international security agenda and aligns itself with statements made on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Unfortunately, the list of issues that should be resolved in order to eliminate nuclear danger is not becoming shorter. The 10 years that have passed since the opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) have not been sufficient to bring about its entry into force. Belarus supports the 2006 Ministerial Statement on the CTBT, and we hope to see progress in the signing and ratification of this important Treaty.

Banning of the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices remains an important issue on the agenda. Belarus supports the so-called package approach: the Conference on Disarmament should begin negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) and, simultaneously, substantive work on the prevention of an arms race in outer space and negative security assurances, in the framework of re-established ad hoc committees. We note with satisfaction that the discussions in the Conference on Disarmament became more active last year, but we hope that the fact that in 2006 the Conference on Disarmament adopted only a procedural report will not have irreversible negative consequences for its future work.

It is a long and difficult way from the development of weapons of mass destruction to a full understanding of the threat they pose to peace and the creation of effective, universal international control mechanisms. The price to be paid for continuing on this path is extremely high in terms of human lives, economic resources diverted from development and decades of effort by the international community to establish control over weapons of mass destruction and to ensure their elimination. That is why it is so important to take preventive measures. Belarus has been a sponsor of the draft resolutions on the prohibition of the development and manufacture of new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons.

That draft will be reintroduced to the First Committee for the next time two years from now. The fact that that resolution was, for the first time, not adopted by consensus during the sixtieth session of the General Assembly is an alarming signal. In this regard, we would like to reiterate our request for like-minded delegations to support that draft.

We are convinced that the only sure way to decrease the sad consequences of the use of conventional weapons is to ensure the most extensive, multilateral approach in addressing the issues of disarmament and arms control. Although the 2006 Small Arms Review Conference has not produced a result, Belarus confirms its commitment to full implementation of the Programme of Action.

We believe that the problem of the illicit transfer of small arms and light weapons, in violation of arms embargoes, to illegal armed groups and terrorist organizations has always been and remains a matter of concern for the international community. Lawful trade

may be discussed only in the context of combating illegal transfers. Belarus is ready to take part in discussions of relevant initiatives. At the same time, we are convinced that future agreements should not limit the right of States to self-defence and the right of legal trade in arms. Agreements should be based on existing international criteria and principles of conventional weapons control.

Belarus has always stood for universalization of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction. We fully implement our obligations under the provisions of that Convention and express our gratitude to the States and organizations that have assisted Belarus in destruction of landmine stockpiles.

In our view, a regional approach to security is both important and necessary. Last year, our country had an opportunity to demonstrate its vision of ways to address the problems of international security during its chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Forum for Security Cooperation. This year, we are chairing the Collective Security Treaty Organization, whose activity is of crucial importance for regional security. That organization enjoys observer status in the General Assembly. Belarus attaches great importance to the elaboration of additional bilateral confidence-building measures with neighbouring countries in the area of security. The regional approach is important, but we firmly believe that it should be an integral part of a global approach. We fully reaffirm our commitment to preserving existing United Nations disarmament machinery, namely the First Committee, the Conference on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission. In conclusion, let me wish all delegations successful and fruitful work at this meeting.

Mr. Hoang Chi Trung (Viet Nam): Let me begin by congratulating you and other members of the Bureau on your election to important posts in the First Committee during the sixty-first session of the General Assembly. I am sure that under your wise guidance, the Committee will reach a satisfactory outcome. First and foremost, my delegation fully associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement on Monday. We also wish to associate ourselves with a statement that will be made on Friday by the representative of Myanmar on behalf of the ASEAN member States.

Convinced that complete and total disarmament constitutes a solid guarantee for world peace and security, Viet Nam has consistently supported all initiatives and efforts aimed at consolidating commitments towards that goal. We regret, however, that the Conference on Disarmament, the 2005 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation Treaty of Nuclear Weapons and the 2006 Small Arms Review Conference, which was held in New York from 26 June to 7 July this year, did not reach satisfactory results. My delegation believes that the current state of disarmament affairs can be rectified only if genuine political will prevails and cooperative efforts to overcome existing difficulties and obstacles are renewed and redoubled.

Weapons of mass destruction pose the most serious threat to humankind today. We wish to reaffirm our strong commitment to cooperate with the international community to get rid of such dangerous weapons. We also value the role of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime. Undoubtedly, all States Parties must fully comply with the Treaty's obligations. We are also convinced that, pending the total elimination of nuclear weapons, efforts for the conclusion of a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument on security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States should be pursued as a matter of high priority.

In the meantime, Viet Nam fully recognizes the important role played by the International Atomic Energy Agency and its safeguards in consolidating and enhancing the verification system for the non-proliferation regime. Assistance to non-nuclear-weapon States in peaceful uses of nuclear energy constitutes an important obligation under the NPT. Furthermore, we wish to stress that the NPT has confirmed the right of countries to access without discrimination research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. One of the most significant achievements we have recorded relating to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation is the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) in 1996. The main objectives and purposes of the Treaty is to promote both nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. That Treaty is an important measure to preserve world peace and international security. We are happy to note that there has been a steady increase in the number of signatories and States ratifying the Treaty. We support

the commitments and concerted efforts of the international community towards achieving universal adherence to the Treaty at an early date.

Viet Nam attaches great importance to the CTBT and was one of the first countries to sign the CTBT in 1996. In March this year, Viet Nam deposited its instrument of ratification. This demonstrates Viet Nam's consistent policy of advancing disarmament, especially nuclear disarmament, and contributing to international peace and security. My delegation wishes to reiterate that Viet Nam continues to support all efforts and initiatives toward creating a world free from all weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons. In line with this principle, Viet Nam will continue to work hard with all other countries to enable the CTBT to achieve universal adherence, thus making further contributions to strengthening world peace and security.

We firmly believe that nuclear-weapon-free zones not only make a significant contribution toward achieving regional and international security but also strengthen the NPT regime and the process of total nuclear disarmament.

In this spirit, my delegation wishes to reiterate its strong support for the nuclear-weapon-free zones established by the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok and Pelindaba, for Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status, as well as for efforts to implement the resolution adopted by the 1995 Review Conference, so that the Middle East will become a zone free of nuclear weapons. We also welcome the signing of the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia in Semipalatinsk, Kazakhstan, on 8 September 2006 and urge all States, particularly the nuclear-weapon States, to fully cooperate with the five Central Asian countries to facilitate the establishment of the Central Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone. We are glad that over 110 countries have now signed onto nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties. We also consider that nuclear-weapon-free zones have significant roles to play in achieving regional and global peace and security.

In this spirit, in 1995, Viet Nam acceded and committed itself to the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone. At the regional level, Viet Nam is working closely with other Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) member countries to ensure that the South-East Asia region is free from nuclear weapons.

With the entry into force of the Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone as of March 1997, it is our view that the participation of all nuclear-weapon States through their accession to the Protocol of this Treaty is essential in the further strengthening of the confidence-building measures between the nuclear-weapon States and the South-East Asian countries. By doing so, the nuclear-weapon States could further demonstrate their commitments to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) process, enhancing negative security assurances to the countries in South-East Asia. Viet Nam once again welcomes China's announcement of its readiness to accede to the Protocol annexed to the Treaty and calls upon all other nuclear-weapon States to do likewise.

In order to review and assess the implementation of the conclusions of the first special session devoted to disarmament, which took place almost three decades ago, the convening of the fourth special session devoted to disarmament is overdue. We are disappointed by the lack of consensus in the open-ended working group set up by the General Assembly to consider the objectives and agenda of the special session, including the possibility of establishing a preparatory committee. We join many other delegations in calling upon the General Assembly to reconvene the working group to find practical ways to hold the special session as soon as possible.

Finally, we hope that through constructive work, the First Committee at this session will manage to formulate concrete and practical measures to strengthen the regime of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation, thus making greater contributions to the consolidation of world peace and security.

Mr. Choi Young-jin (Republic of Korea): My delegation wishes to join others in congratulating you, Madam, on your assumption of the Chairmanship of this Committee. From my experience as Chair of this Committee during its previous session, I understand how difficult it is to lead a group of Member States, with their divergent views and interests, through such sensitive issues as disarmament and international security. However, I am confident that your able leadership will guide us through the deliberations ahead towards fruitful results.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems poses an ever-increasing

threat. Weapons currently in existence have the potential to annihilate all of humanity several times over; the possibility of their use by terrorists, who do not hesitate to target innocent civilians, is an undeniable reality. At the same time, the integrity and relevance of the international non-proliferation system, centred on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), is being undermined by the non-compliance of some States. The unwillingness of nuclear-weapon States to fulfil their obligations under Article VI of the Treaty is deepening the rift between the nuclear haves and the have-nots. The impasse on the Korean peninsula and the ongoing Iranian nuclear issue continue to overshadow the international non-proliferation and disarmament regime. Against this backdrop, I would like to highlight my delegation's position on issues that we deem important.

Despite all the setbacks and challenges, it remains a given fact that the NPT should continue to be the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime, and that the regime should be strengthened and improved. In addition to continuing to work on making the NPT universal, we should strive towards the universal adoption of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Additional Protocol, which would enhance global confidence in the NPT system by bolstering its monitoring and verification capabilities.

As practical means of strengthening the non-proliferation regime, priority should be placed on the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the immediate commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty, as was strongly recommended in the recent report of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission headed by Mr. Hans Blix. These steps would significantly strengthen the NPT system and lead us closer to a world free of nuclear weapons.

Parallel efforts should be made to strengthen the disarmament and non-proliferation regimes for other classes of weapons of mass destruction, particularly the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC).

The CWC has reached near universality, with the recent ratification of the 180th State, covering 98 per cent of the global population, since its entry into force in 1997. As we approach the tenth anniversary of the Convention's entry into force next year, we once again urge those countries outside the CWC to respond to our call and work together with the rest of the international community to achieve the complete elimination of chemical weapons stockpiles from the world.

As for the BWC, my delegation expects that the sixth Review Conference, slated for November of this year, will be a fresh opportunity to review the current status of the Convention. We hope that it will result in a plan of work to make the Convention more viable and relevant.

Our efforts to strengthen the multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation regimes should be accompanied by measures to enhance the effectiveness of controls on materials and technology related to weapons of mass destruction. Established export control systems, such as the Nuclear Suppliers Group, the Missile Technology Control Regime, the Australia Group and the Wassenaar Arrangement should be strengthened. In the area of means of delivery, we support the strengthening of The Hague Code of Conduct and hope to see the number of participating countries further increase in years to come.

The proliferation of conventional weapons is also a matter of increasing concern to the international community. The adoption in 2001 of the Programme of Action on Small Arms and in 2005 of the International Instrument on identifying and tracing small arms were landmarks in addressing the problem of small arms proliferation. Despite the failure to agree to further measures at the 2006 Small Arms Review Conference in July, we should not weaken our commitment to fulfilling the Programme of Action. To this end, my delegation supports the initiative for an international instrument on controlling international arms transfers. The establishment of a group of governmental experts would be a good start for the examination of this issue in detail.

As part of our commitment to multilateralism, the Republic of Korea has been strongly supportive of multilateral security cooperation in Northeast Asia as a priority in its foreign and security policy. North-East Asia remains in transition characterized by uncertainty and variability. Such multilateral security cooperation in the region would entail intensive discussion and the broad support of the international community. We hope the efforts towards multilateral security cooperation are met with constructive thinking and wholehearted support by the member States in the region and the international community.

Yesterday, 3 October, however, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea declared its intent to conduct a nuclear test in the future. The Government of the Republic of Korea has expressed its profound concern and regret, as the declaration is tantamount to an abrogation of the North-South Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

The Republic of Korea is engaged in in-depth consultations with concerned States on ways to resume the Six-Party Talks and to implement the 19 September 2005 Joint Statement. Pyongyang's declaration runs counter to such efforts to seek a resolution through dialogue. My Government strongly urges the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to show restraint and refrain from any action that might aggravate tension, to return immediately to the Six-Party Talks without preconditions and to abandon all nuclear weapons and existing weapons programmes as stipulated in Security Council resolution 1695 (2006).

Mr. Chaouachi (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the Tunisian delegation, Madam, I offer you my most sincere congratulations upon your election to the Chairmanship of the First Committee. You may be assured of my delegation's support and cooperation in accomplishing your mandate so that the outcome of our work may be satisfactory. My delegation associates itself with the statements made yesterday on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and on behalf of the African Group.

Tunisia has always considered that the arms race is carried out at the expense of the most basic needs of the civilian population. It has always considered it appropriate to divert resources allocated to military expenditures towards development and economic growth.

Difficulties continue to stand in the way of the multilateral process of disarmament. My delegation continues to believe that agreed multilateral solutions in accordance with the United Nations Charter provide the best means of settling, in a lasting manner, many disarmament and international security issues.

At the September 2005 World Summit, the international community once again missed an opportunity to set precise objectives with a view to reviving the disarmament and non-proliferation process, which — we do not need to be reminded — has slowed over the past few years. Three months earlier, in May 2005, we had seen the failure of the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Likewise, last summer Member States witnessed a new failure at the Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

Concerning another issue, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty has not yet entered into force 10 years after its adoption. At the same time, the Conference on Disarmament, the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating body, is still having difficulties establishing a balanced programme of work that is accepted by all. Finally, the Disarmament Commission, through a lack of political will and flexibility on the part of several countries, is having difficulty commencing its new negotiating cycle.

If we proceed to an evaluation of the nuclear disarmament situation over the last three decades, we are bound to note a lack of tangible progress. We are still far from the goals set by the NPT and its Review Conferences, in particular concerning the issue of nuclear disarmament under strict and effective international control. In that framework, we repeat our appeal for full implementation of the commitment the nuclear-weapon States made at the 2000 Review Conference to eliminate their nuclear arsenals.

While waiting for the elimination of all nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, non-nuclear States are entitled to call for effective guarantees against the use or threat of use of those weapons. At the same time, we emphasize that the development of new types of nuclear weapons runs counter to the guarantees given by the nuclear-weapon States when the CTBT was concluded, namely that the Treaty would prevent the further improvement of existing nuclear weapons and the development of new types of nuclear weapons.

In the same spirit, we note how important it is that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty enter into force and become universal, 10 years after its adoption.

My country recently took part in the 20 September 2006 meeting at United Nations Headquarters to adopt a Joint Ministerial Statement in support of the CTBT, which my country fully supports.

In another area, the conclusion of a treaty banning the production and stocking of fissile material

for military purposes remains a goal to be achieved. Indeed, such a treaty is still not even being negotiated. Agreement on a treaty should be accelerated with a view to the effective and swift elimination of nuclear weapons.

We also believe it is time to convene a fourth special session of the General Assembly on disarmament in order to find ways to relaunch the multilateral disarmament process. In that respect, we hope that an open-ended working group on the issue will be established and will succeed in formulating positive recommendations along those lines.

The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of agreements freely arrived at among the States of the regions concerned and the creation of zones free of all weapons of mass destruction constitute an important means of promoting non-proliferation and disarmament at the regional and international levels and can help strengthen the NPT regime. In that respect, the Middle East remains one of the regions most affected, because of the refusal of Israel to join the NPT and to place its nuclear installations under full-scope International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards, despite the many appeals of other States of the region and the appeals made by the General Assembly in its numerous resolutions on this issue. In that respect we call upon the international community, in particular the influential Powers to take urgent and practical measures for the creation of such a zone.

Tunisia understands the importance of the Convention banning anti-personnel landmines and its benefits for international peace and security, and it was quick to ratify the Convention and has destroyed its stocks of anti-personnel mines. Tunisia hopes that all States parties will take part in the process leading to the attainment of the Convention's goals.

My country is contributing actively to the efforts of Mediterranean countries to provide a comprehensive, coordinated and concerted response to the challenges that face them all, with a view to making the Mediterranean basin a space for dialogue, exchange and cooperation, thus guaranteeing peace, stability and prosperity in the region. My country will continue to play its role in favour of the cause of peace and disarmament. We reaffirm our readiness to cooperate fully with the Chair of the Committee and the other members of the Bureau and we wish the Committee success in its work.

Mr. Arias Cárdenas (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We congratulate you, Madam, on your election to the Chairmanship and congratulate the other members of the Bureau. My delegation is ready to assist you in the accomplishment of your delicate tasks.

Our delegation subscribes to the statement made by the delegation of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). However, we would like to highlight the interest of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in a number of international security and disarmament issues. The importance we attach to this matter is reflected in article 129 of the 1999 national constitution, which states that the State shall prevent the entry into the country of toxic and harmful waste, as well as the production and use of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons.

The existence of nuclear weapons threatens humanity's survival, and the only real assurance against the use or threat of use of such weapons is their total destruction. We ask that no further new nuclear weapons be developed and for existing weapons to be destroyed. We are convinced that the most effective way to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world would be for all States, without exception, to comply with the multilateral agreements that have been negotiated in this area and to respect their provisions and apply them in full. To that end, we should spare no effort to bring about the universalization of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation Treaty of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the timely entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

In this regard, nuclear States should implement the 13 practical steps set out in the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference. At the same time, it is crucial that effective assurances be provided to the non-nuclear-weapon States with regard to the non-use or threat of use of such weapons. In this context, the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones is one of the most effective ways to eliminate the presence of such weapons. We are also of the view that nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament are intrinsically linked and should be addressed in tandem, and in an integrated manner, given that the threat posed by these weapons arises through their very existence. We uphold the inalienable right of countries to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and reject any disregard for the sovereignty of countries and their legitimate

right to develop technologies and energies that they view as necessary for their sustainable development.

Our country does not have any chemical weapons either, although we do have a sizeable chemical industry. In November 2005, we established the National Authority for the Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, and we expect a special law regulating chemical weapons to be promulgated in the first half of 2007.

In 2004 and 2005, we submitted annual declarations on the use of chemicals that are subject to the Convention, and we are preparing a new report to be presented in coming months. Moreover, in March 2006, inspectors of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) carried out their second visit to Venezuela. The inspection activities were carried out in a climate of cooperation and transparency, and the inspectors concluded that our country is strictly complying with its obligations under the Convention.

Venezuela supports international efforts to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. However, we wish to stress that only in a multilateral, inclusive and non-discriminatory forum can we make progress in the conclusion of agreements in this area. We are concerned by the recourse to unilateral solutions and to selective and discriminatory approaches to preventing proliferation. This undermines multilateralism and international cooperation in this area. We also have reservations about the trend to transfer disarmament and non-proliferation issues to the Security Council, a forum in which United Nations Member States are unable to participate on an equal footing.

Multilateralism must be the basic principle in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation. In this respect, we fully support the role of the Disarmament Commission as a specialized, democratic deliberative forum for discussion of disarmament and international security matters. Likewise, we reaffirm the importance of the Conference on Disarmament as the only multilateral negotiating body on disarmament; we are concerned at the lack of flexibility demonstrated by certain States that have blocked the consensus we need to adopt the programme of work of the Conference.

Our country recognizes the negative impact that the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons has had on certain countries, and we have joined multilateral efforts to combat this problem. We are implementing the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, and last April we submitted our most recent national report on the implementation of the Programme of Action.

Venezuela considers that the State bears the main responsibility for adopting measures to prevent, combat and eliminate the illicit trade in these weapons, while national institutions are responsible for their implementation. We believe that international cooperation is an important element that contributes effectively to combating this illicit activity, and we consider that this cooperation should fully respect the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and international law. In particular, it should take account of the principles of the sovereign equality of States, territorial integrity, the peaceful settlement of disputes and non-interference in the internal affairs of States. At the same time, this cooperation should take account of the specific circumstances and features, the needs and experiences of different countries, regions and subregions.

Moreover, it is necessary to respect the sovereign right of States to produce, import and possess small arms and light weapons that they consider necessary to meet their self-defence and security needs. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela condemns outright the implementation by any State of unilateral measures that would undermine that right. We believe that the authorities in States where the main manufacturers are located should incorporate in their legislation regulations on the adequate marking of weapons before their exportation, in order to facilitate the tracing of these weapons and in order to prevent their diversion to the black market. In addition, Venezuela believes that ammunition is an integral part of the problem and that measures to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons are incomplete if they fail to address the matter of ammunition.

As a responsible State, Venezuela is committed to preserve the environment for present and future generations. We reaffirm the need to continue adopting the necessary measures to advance in the areas of disarmament and international security, without jeopardizing either the environment or the real contribution that such measures can make to sustainable development. Moreover, we believe that

progress made in the area of science and technology for civilian purposes should benefit humankind, thus contributing to the economic and social development of peoples.

We reject the establishment of technology export control regimes; they are inherently discriminatory and infringe upon the sovereign right of nations to make use of new technologies for peaceful purposes.

We are also of the view that States with major space technology should refrain from placing any defensive or offensive military systems in outer space. They should also undertake to provide information about their activities in that area. We support the adoption of stronger transparency and confidence-building measures relating to outer space activities and support all international efforts towards the conclusion of a binding instrument to prevent an arms race in outer space. Such an instrument would help significantly in strengthening the legal regime in that area.

In conclusion, we reiterate our firm support for general and complete disarmament. We are committed to uphold our principles on disarmament and international security and we shall continue to participate actively within the United Nations system in order to bring about a safer and more peaceful multipolar world. Venezuela is an independent voice for social justice, for peace and for security.

Ms. Loke (Singapore): Let me begin, Madam, by congratulating you on your election as Chairperson of the First Committee. My delegation looks forward to working with you. We are confident in your leadership and assure you of our cooperation.

There often is a sense of deep resignation within the First Committee. That is a result of how little we seem to achieve from year to year. Several speakers have already referred to examples such as the failure to mention disarmament and non-proliferation in the 2005 World Summit Outcome and the failure of the 2005 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). More recently, there was the failure of the 2006 Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons to agree on a final document.

Those speakers were right to point out that progress has been slow. Yet, I do not wish to succumb to pessimism. The Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Nobuaki Tanaka, has already admonished us against taking that approach. He has said that we are not powerless in the face of these issues.

I agree. The reality is that disarmament and non-proliferation are serious issues with myriad implications, national and global. That is why discussions are often sensitive and contentious. Admittedly, that often results in slow progress. But on the flip side, it also means that there is broad and serious engagement. There is recognition that these issues matter. There is understanding that these issues extend beyond national borders.

In that context, I hope we can find pragmatic ways to move forward together. There are common areas of interest. For example, we all find ourselves in a different security environment than before. In the past, we tended to focus almost exclusively on States. That was natural, since States were the main actors. But today, security issues tend to extend further afield. Clearly, States are no longer the only actors. Non-State actors are a concern to us all.

What would happen if a non-State actor acquired a weapon of mass destruction? That is a chilling thought. Many countries represented here have already been subjected to terrorist attacks. Those attacks have not been geographically limited. Many of us — from Asia to Africa, from Latin America to Europe and North America — have suffered as a result of attacks or have been targeted at one point or another. Thankfully, if I can even use the term, these have been conventional attacks. Imagine the greater devastation if they had not been. Let me repeat: we all have a stake in preventing such acts.

In the current environment, global efforts are crucial. We need to recognize that disarmament and non-proliferation go together. It will be difficult to have progress on one without the other. States with weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) should recognize that the existence of vast quantities of such weapons is a source of deep disquiet. States without WMDs should realize that having them often adds nothing to their security. Both sides need to be pragmatic and to try to build confidence. There are already multilateral initiatives that we can build on. Examples are the NPT, the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC). The world also awaits the coming into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-

Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), 10 years after its adoption by the General Assembly. We can also seize the opportunity of the BTWC Review Conference to be held later this year to minimize the dangers of the misuse of biotechnology.

As Mr. Tanaka has said, we are not powerless. We have, as a community, already made progress in addressing threats of WMD proliferation to non-State actors. Singapore welcomes the extension of the mandate of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to Council resolution 1540 (2004) via Security Council resolution 1673 (2006). We are also heartened by the General Assembly's adoption of the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism in April 2005. We urge Member States to take steps to ensure the follow-through of these instruments.

As a small country with an open and trade-dependent economy, Singapore is acutely aware of the dangers posed by WMDs. We have tried to take measures to mitigate those dangers. We have banned the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of chemical weapons. We have also tightened our export control system. Our Strategic Goods Control Act covers export, re-export, trans-shipment, transit and brokering, as well as intangible technology transfers involving strategic goods and items suspected of WMD end-use. We participate in the Container Security Initiative and the Megaports Initiative. We participate in the Proliferation Security Initiative. In line with article XI of the CWC, we have been holding the Singapore International Symposium on Protection Against Toxic Substances since 1998.

The United Nations has a vital role in global disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. The United Nations is an Organization with a global mandate and international legitimacy. The fact that we are all here today discussing these issues is proof positive. I hope that we can work together in building effective and cooperative disarmament and non-proliferation regimes. It is in our common interest to do so.

Mr. Al-Bader (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): It pleases me, at the outset, Madam, to offer you my sincere congratulations upon your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. I wish you every success in your mission. In addition, I extend congratulations to the Vice-Chairs and the Rapporteur on their elections. My thanks go also to the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs for his admirable efforts on disarmament issues and for the comprehensive statement he made at the beginning of the general debate of the First Committee. I wish him every success in his work.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

The serious challenges facing the world concerning the proliferation of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction continue to pose a severe threat to international peace and security. The international community, as represented by the United Nations and its organs, has not achieved any qualitative success in controlling the proliferation of those weapons. On the contrary, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction continues apace despite international conventions and treaties regulating it.

We can identify a number of reasons for the current imbalance, in which some States and Governments are flouting agreements and conventions on nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). One of the most important reasons is the lack of real political will to honour the moral commitments set out in those documents and in the agreed outcomes of disarmament conferences. The fact that no punitive measures or sanctions have been imposed against States that have violated those instruments reveals variable objectivity and neutrality. Employing double standards by ignoring some States while focusing on others leads to a lack of confidence in these agreements and conventions. The fact that no concrete practical steps have been taken concerning the pledge of some nuclear-weapon States to give up their arsenals of weapons of mass destruction represents a form of imbalance and injustice towards non-nuclear-weapon States, which find themselves under constant threat by nuclear-weapon States. Among the reasons for the failure of the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, held in New York, were the failure of nuclear-weapon States to honour their commitments and the lack of emphasis on the outcomes of the 1995 and 2000 Review Conferences.

We believe that regional disarmament initiatives are valuable and must be always emphasized, because they reflect trust among national Governments within a region. There are many excellent examples of nuclear-

weapon-free zones, such as those that have been established in Africa, South America and Central Asia.

Unfortunately, the situation in the Middle East is quite different, because that region could, like an active volcano, explode at any moment owing to a serious imbalance of power, in addition to a lack of confidence-building measures as a result of the occupation and confiscation of territory from its rightful owners. The fact that the international community has ignored the existence of Israeli nuclear arsenal in the Middle East has caused frustration and mistrust vis-à-vis international agreements and conventions. At a time when people are calling forcefully for the imposition of sanctions against certain States for attempting to acquire nuclear technology, we find flagrant disregard for Israel's possession of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons; no one has called upon it to renounce such weapons. To the contrary, there is covert and open cooperation with Israel, which reflects a flagrant contradiction in position and a lack of credibility. Therefore, my delegation wishes to stress that it is essential to eliminate all forms of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons. The rules must be applied to all States without exception in order to buttress the credibility of these conventions.

In highlighting the dangers of weapons of mass destruction, we must not minimize the importance of the fact that the proliferation of conventional weapons — including small arms and light weapons and landmines in all their forms — also poses a threat to international peace and security, particularly when such weapons fall into the hands of criminal gangs or terrorist groups and when State Governments or institutions fail or collapse. The challenges represented by the uncontrolled proliferation of small arms and light weapons exacerbate tension in any State or community and have a great impact on their security. That is particularly the case in environments where tension exists due to economic and social inequities or a lack of political rights for minorities. The failure of the United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held in New York in June 2006, to reach any valuable conclusions was another blow to United Nations efforts and only highlighted its inability to control that illegal trade.

Confidence is needed on the part of national Governments and States in order to control the arms race. It is the absence of such confidence and the presence of fear that compel States to possess the most sophisticated and lethal weapons. My delegation believes that the best way to control the arms race is to seek to resolve seemingly intractable international political disputes by persuading the parties to resort to dialogue and to resolve their problems as swiftly as possible through diplomacy.

Mr. Lara-Peña (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I wish to congratulate you, Madam, on your election as Chairperson of the Committee at the sixty-first session of the General Assembly. Through you, I also take this opportunity to congratulate the other members of the Bureau.

In his recent address to the General Assembly (see A/61/PV.13), our President spoke of the erosion of the internal security of nations, leading to increased violence and criminality — a situation fuelled by drug trafficking, the illicit traffic of arms and the trafficking of persons, among other factors.

Using all the resources provided by the United Nations, we must establish the measures and controls necessary to curb the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, because such weapons are one of the principal elements undermining security among our citizens. As President Fernández Reyna indicated in his statement, the Dominican Republic remains vigilant in this ongoing struggle and urges the international community to strengthen the control and prevention mechanisms needed to meet these modern challenges.

Addressing this type of threat, which affects many communities throughout the world, requires a global response supported by the entire international community and made by the Organization best suited for that purpose by virtue of its uniqueness: the United Nations. Therefore, we express our deep disappointment that no consensus could be reached on a final document of the United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. We stress the importance of determining, as soon as possible, what follow-up should be given to the Programme of Action.

Here, we should reiterate that multilateralism, as the most democratic and participatory means at our

disposal, must remain the instrument that continues to guide our commitment as members of the great family of humanity seeking to resolve our common problems. It was the use of that resource that recently enabled the Security Council to adopt and implement its resolution 1701 (2006), which expanded the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, provided for the establishment of a cessation of hostilities and alleviated the suffering of the people affected by that crisis. In that connection, I must acknowledge the tireless diligence of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, to that end.

Of course, in addition to the willingness of the Secretary-General, it would be ideal to have a General Assembly that was capable of exercising all its powers, enjoyed greater flexibility in its relations with the Security Council and had greater capacity to adopt binding decisions. Our world has survived the cold war, but other dangers lie in wait. Terrorism affects us all and is a threat to all of us, but, as was said last year in this very same forum, hunger and extreme poverty continue to fuel terrorism. If we are able to resolve these long-standing difficulties, then we shall be able to make progress towards general peace and security. There are other problems that are of concern to us, such as the use of nuclear energy for non-peaceful ends. In the Treaty of Tlatelolco, the Latin America and Caribbean region established an instrument that can be used to protect our continent from the threat of nuclear weapons. This is a commitment shared by all countries of the region and which could provide an example for all countries. It is our most fervent wish that similar agreements be concluded in all those regions that have not yet assumed such a commitment, a failure that endangers the destinies of millions of people. In this regard, we would like to congratulate Central Asia as the most recent region to declare itself a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

As agreed upon at the fourteenth summit of Heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Movement, we recognize the inalienable right that all States have to develop and use nuclear energy for purely peaceful means through rigorous respect for International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards. The IAEA is the only body that enjoys recognized authority in this area. Any other use or threat of use of this energy, including disregard for the authority that is entrusted by the IAEA to the international community, must be firmly rejected.

The Caribbean Sea is a large sub-oceanic basin with a surface area of approximately 1.02 million square miles. The Caribbean is a fragile and complex marine area among the large seas and adjoining bays on the western side of the Atlantic. It is shared by some 40 different countries, States and territories of differing size and at different stages of economic development, which to a large extent depend on the Caribbean Sea for their social, economic and environmental well-being. One of the most delicate aspects facing us with regard to the use of the Caribbean Sea is the variety of uses made by the States in the region. For example, there is one group of countries that, owing to their territorial size, depend closely on the preservation of the Caribbean. Sustainable management of the Caribbean is vital to ensure the survival of that group of countries. There is a group of countries that attach great importance to sustainable tourism and greatly depend on this sector. There is another group of countries that attach great importance to the use and exploitation of the seabed's mineral resources, especially oil and natural gas. All States in the region attach importance to shipping.

For all of these reasons, our Governments are seeking to ensure that the Caribbean is declared a special area in the context of sustainable development. This concept of a special area would mean that the Caribbean is recognized as a semi-closed sea, including its resources and adjacent coastal areas, which for technical reasons stemming from its oceanographic and ecological condition would require the adoption of special mandatory measures to ensure the preservation and sustainable development of this area, paying due consideration to economic, social and environmental considerations.

The Dominican Republic is one of the islands surrounded by the Caribbean Sea. That is part of our wealth. Thanks to this sea, the Dominican Republic has become an important centre for tourism, and the preservation of the Caribbean Sea is vital for us, for our neighbours and for all of those who come to enjoy our beaches. For that reason and as has been said earlier, we are particularly concerned about the security and quality of our sea. In this respect, we call once again upon the international community to exercise due vigilance in order to guarantee implementation of all security measures pertaining to the transportation of radioactive material and harmful waste, as established by the IAEA and the International Maritime

Organization, as well as through the adoption of regulations that complement those measures.

In addition, we support the initiative launched by the Association of Caribbean States to submit a draft resolution that would declare and call for international recognition of the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development. Because of the importance and dependence that many of our countries have for the Caribbean Sea, it is not a mere intellectual or academic exercise to preserve the Caribbean environment and ecosystem. This should rather be seen in the context of for an economic security strategy for all our Governments. For these reasons, we encourage those delegations also working with the Second Committee to support this draft resolution.

The Dominican Republic has special interest in matters pertaining to pollution of the marine environment, exchange of information on sea routes, communication of contingency plans in the event of mishap, the commitment to clean up in the event of a spill, decontamination of affected areas and the establishment of effective mechanisms and regulations for liability in the event of damage. In the same spirit of cooperation, we would like to conclude by expressing the willingness of the delegation of the Dominican Republic to contribute to the success of our work.

Ms. Mtshali (South Africa): My delegation wishes to congratulate you on your election to preside over the work of the 2006 session of the First Committee. I also wish to fully associate myself with the general statements delivered on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition, the Non-Aligned Movement and the African Group.

This meeting of the First Committee comes at a time when the international disarmament and non-proliferation regime continues to face a number of challenges. It takes place against the backdrop of a lack of any substantive outcome at the 2005 Review Conference of Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as well as the failure of last year's High-level Summit to reach agreement on matters relating to nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. The continued failure of the Conference on Disarmament to reach agreement on a programme of work underscores these challenges, as does the decade-long delay in the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. The recent outcome — or rather the lack of it — of the 2006 Small Arms Review Conference may be added to this growing list of setbacks. Furthermore, during the past few years we have witnessed a growing trend to focus almost exclusively on the non-proliferation provisions of relevant internationally legally binding instruments, especially those relating to weapons of mass destruction. Whilst South Africa remains fully committed to the continuous review and strengthening of measures aimed at preventing the proliferation of all weapons of mass destruction, we believe that real progress in securing our world from the threat of these weapons can be achieved only through concomitant progress in the area of disarmament.

As a country that has foregone the nuclear weapons option, democratic South Africa has always believed that nuclear weapons have no role in today's world's security order. We, therefore, call on all Parties to the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to fulfil and implement each and every obligation under the Treaty, as the success of the Treaty depends on the fulfilment of all of its objectives. Equally important is full implementation of the decisions and resolutions of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference and the practical steps for systematic and progressive efforts to achieve nuclear disarmament that were agreed upon at the 2000 NPT Review Conference. In order for efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons proliferation to be sustainable, equal efforts must be made to eliminate the nuclear weapons themselves.

There is growing unease that, while demands are being made for non-nuclear-weapon States to agree to new measures aimed at non-proliferation, concrete and equivalent actions towards nuclear disarmament are neglected. In that regard, my country views the three pillars of the NPT — nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy — as indispensable for the maintenance of the equilibrium of the global security regime, for without each of those pillars, the Treaty would not have come into being.

South Africa wishes to reiterate that it does not support unwarranted restrictions on the NPT's guaranteed access to nuclear capabilities for peaceful purposes by States that are fully compliant with all their obligations under the Treaty. The imposition of additional restrictive measures on some NPT States parties, while allowing others to have access to those capabilities,

can serve only to exacerbate existing inequalities that are already inherent in the NPT and to undermine one of the central bargains contained in the Treaty.

We are therefore concerned that proposals are being made, not least those related to the use of sensitive material and technologies, which may infringe on the inalienable right of all countries to the peaceful uses of such technologies, consistent with their Treaty obligations. We should guard against the subjective notion that such sensitive materials and technologies are safe in the hands of some States, but pose a risk when others have access to them. A determination as to whether those sensitive materials and technologies are safe in the hands of certain States can be made only on the basis of whether they are indeed intended for use or are already being used in the development of weapons of mass destruction.

In that regard, the relevant international institutions responsible for verifying that such materials and technologies are not diverted to non-peaceful activities, including the IAEA and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), continue to play a central role in providing the necessary assurances.

On another matter, my delegation remains concerned at the continued failure of the Conference on Disarmament to agree on a programme of work and to commence substantive negotiations on disarmament issues. Nevertheless, we have been somewhat encouraged by the more constructive and focused deliberations that have taken place at the Conference this year. South Africa is honoured to assume the Conference presidency in 2007. As the first President for next year's session of the Conference, we will, with the cooperation and support of all States parties, exert all possible efforts and examine all options to try and resolve the deadlock that has existed in the Conference for far too long. In that regard, I may mention that my delegation intends to conduct consultations with members of the Conference on Disarmament on the way forward during the margins of this session of the First Committee. In that context, I can only appeal to all delegations to show maximum flexibility, compromise and political will in order to break the impasse that will allow the Conference on Disarmament to get back to work.

In the field of efforts to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, South Africa will this year have the responsibility to introduce, in consultation with and on behalf of the other two coordinators of the annual First Committee omnibus small arms resolution — Colombia and Japan — that draft resolution during this session. We firmly believe that we cannot allow the fact that we were unable to agree on a final report at this year's Review Conference to detract from the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons. In addition, the importance of the resolution as the main implementation framework for the Programme of Action and its follow-up has not diminished.

Accordingly, our intention is to reaffirm the importance of the implementation of the Programme of Action at the national, regional and global levels, as well as the international instrument to trace illicit small arms and light weapons; to express support for the process on the illicit brokering that will commence soon; as well as emphasizing the necessity to maintain the relevance of the consultative process on the implementation of the Programme of Action, in particular the agreed system of the biennial meetings of States.

As we approach the Third Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW), we believe that we need to take serious stock of our progress since the previous Review Conference in 2001. Indeed, we managed to negotiate and adopt Protocol V on explosive remnants of war in November 2003, but we have also noted since then the slow progress on other CCW issues being considered by the Group of Governmental Experts. We trust that the forthcoming Review Conference will afford the opportunity to achieve substantive progress on outstanding issues and stand ready to engage with other delegations to make such progress a reality.

Regarding the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), South Africa believes that the Sixth Review Conference, due to take place later this year, will afford States parties to the Convention an opportunity to strengthen that very important disarmament and non-proliferation instrument. The Conference will present the first opportunity since 1996 for States parties to do a thorough review of the Convention. As the international security environment has changed substantially in the past

decade, South Africa accords great importance to the review and strengthening of the BWC.

With reference to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), South Africa will later this month be hosting a seminar for southern African States parties to the CWC on national implementation measures under the Convention. We are organizing the seminar in cooperation with the secretariat of the OPCW and with the assistance of the Netherlands. The aim of the seminar is to increase awareness of the CWC amongst the senior policy-makers in States parties from southern Africa and to consider a plan of action to harmonize the implementation of the CWC within the Southern Africa Development Community subregion.

We appreciate the difficulties that some possessor States are experiencing with regard to the destruction programmes of their chemical weapons stockpiles. We, however, urge them to ensure that their chemical weapons stockpiles are destroyed within the agreed time frames and as soon as possible.

In conclusion, our efforts in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation to date appear to have been less than sterling, and surely much more could and should be done to ensure a safer world for all our citizens. We cannot continue to conduct business as usual and remain oblivious to the fact that our business has virtually come to a standstill. We must intensify our international efforts and re-invest in disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. In that way, we may succeed if we can show the necessary flexibility, compromise and political will.

Mr. Uras (Turkey): Let me begin by congratulating you, Madam, and the other members of the Bureau on your well-deserved election. You can be assured of my delegation's full support as you steer the work of the Committee to its successful conclusion.

I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome the new Under-Secretary-General, Ambassador Tanaka, and to wish him every success in his new post.

Turkey has already aligned itself with the statement made by the representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union. I will therefore elaborate on some issues from our national perspective.

Turkey favours overall global disarmament and supports all efforts in the field of sustaining international security through arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament. Turkey is a party to all international non-proliferation instruments and export-control regimes and wishes to see the universalization and effective implementation of those instruments.

Located in a region of particular concern with respect to proliferation, Turkey vigilantly monitors developments in this field and takes part in collective efforts aimed at devising measures to reverse the alarming trend.

Despite the failure of the Review Conference last year and recent developments contesting its standpoint, Turkey believes that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is still a unique and irreplaceable multilateral instrument, the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime, and the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament. We should exert every effort to protect its integrity and credibility. Turkey sincerely hopes that the new review cycle of the NPT to be initiated next year will prepare the ground for a successful Review Conference in 2010 through early agreement on many pending issues.

In that respect, let me underline the critical and indispensable role of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Turkey remains convinced that the verification authority of the Agency should be further strengthened and the Model Additional Protocol adopted as the universal norm for verifying compliance with the NPT.

Turkey supports the establishment in the Middle East of an effectively verifiable zone free of WMDs and their means of delivery, and encourages all efforts to develop a common regional understanding on this project, with the participation of all parties concerned.

Turkey welcomes the establishment last September by five Central Asian States of a nuclear-weapon-free-zone. Turkey also welcomes the extension of the mandate of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to Council resolution 1540 (2004) and will continue to support its work, which we believe complements global efforts against the proliferation of WMDs and their means of delivery.

Turkey regards the Proliferation Security Initiative as an important cooperative action complementing the existing mechanisms enshrined in various international instruments and export control regimes. We will continue to support the Initiative.

Similarly, Turkey has voiced its support for the recently announced Global Initiative to Combat

Nuclear Terrorism and has expressed its readiness to host the second meeting of the Initiative in Turkey.

Turkey attaches special importance to the negotiation of a non-discriminatory and universal treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. The banning of the production of such material would strengthen both nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. A more comprehensive and non-discriminatory approach should include the issues of existing stockpiles and verification.

Turkey considers the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) as two important components of the global system against proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The non-accession of some States to these Conventions continues to pose a serious challenge to global security. Once again, we reiterate our call for wider adherence to, and effective implementation of, those Conventions. The Chemical Weapons Convention has proved to be an effective instrument for prohibiting and eliminating an entire category of weapons of mass destruction under a strict and efficient international verification and control mechanism. Compliance by signatories with the deadlines established for the verifiable destruction of chemical weapons stockpiles remains essential. The sixth Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention Review Conference will commence in Geneva in November. We believe that the BTWC too needs to be strengthened with a verification mechanism.

The progressive increase in the range and accuracy of ballistic missiles makes the proliferation threat all the more worrying. Turkey believes that the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation constitutes a practical step towards an internationally accepted legal framework in this field. We wish to see the universalization of the Hague Code of Conduct.

Conventional weapons proliferation is also a cause of concern for Turkey. The excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons pose a significant threat to peace and security, as well as to the social and economic development of many countries. There is also a close relationship between the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and terrorism. Turkey will continue to contribute actively to all efforts within the United Nations and other forums to foster international cooperation and the establishment of effective norms and rules, with a view to combating and eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all their aspects. The failure to achieve tangible results at last year's Review Conference was disappointing. Nonetheless, Turkey remains committed to the effective implementation and further strengthening of the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons.

Cognizant of the damage that small arms inflict on peace and security worldwide, Turkey supports the project of agreeing on an arms trade treaty that aims to cease the unregulated and uncontrolled trade of arms worldwide and establish common standards for the global trade in conventional arms. The proliferation and unauthorized use of man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS) continues to be a matter of serious concern in connection with small arms and light weapons. Turkey maintains the view that the international community should act decisively to improve stockpile security and strengthen export controls in countries that import or manufacture MANPADS.

Another worrying issue in the field of conventional weapons is the scourge of the indiscriminate and inhumane weapons known as anti-personnel landmines. Turkey fully supports efforts towards the universalization and effective implementation of the Ottawa Convention and the vision of a world free from anti-personnel mines. Turkey became a party to the Ottawa Convention in 2004. Yet, mine clearance activities have been under way in Turkey since 1998. The work in Turkey to clear all emplaced anti-personnel landmines is planned for completion by 2014, in line with our commitments deriving from the Convention.

In this context, I should also emphasize that, since rights and obligations enshrined in the Convention and in the Nairobi Action Plan apply to States parties when engagement with armed non-State actors is contemplated, the States parties concerned should be informed; their consent would be necessary in order for such an engagement to take place. Activities conducted within the scope of the implementation of the Ottawa Convention should in no way serve the purposes of terrorist organizations.

I would also like to inform the First Committee that Turkey has become a State party to the Convention

on Certain Conventional Weapons as amended in 2001, Protocol I, Amended Protocol II and Protocol IV. This Convention, along with the Protocols that I have just mentioned, entered into force for Turkey on 2 September 2005.

My intervention would not be complete without a reference to our support for the system of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. This tool in hand is, in our view, a very useful mechanism for completing our work in this field.

In conclusion, Madam Chairperson, let me assure you once again of the full support and cooperation of my delegation.

Mr. Yousfi (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): First of all, Madam, permit me to offer you the warmest congratulations of the Algerian delegation on your well-deserved election as Chair of the First Committee and to assure you and the other members of the Bureau of our full and complete cooperation in ensuring a successful outcome in our work. I would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to your predecessor, Ambassador Choi Young-jin, for his efforts in guiding the work of the Committee at the last session. Also, I cannot fail to wish Mr. Nobuake Tanaka, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, great success in his new functions.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements made by the delegations of Indonesia and Nigeria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the African Group, respectively.

One year ago, the General Assembly World Summit gave our leaders the opportunity to reassert their allegiance to the rule of law and the multilateral system and to make a solemn commitment to move ahead in confronting the threats and challenges the world faces today.

Today, it is most regrettable to note that, in a disturbing international situation fraught with consequences for international peace and security, the multilateral disarmament process is becoming increasingly uncertain and is showing disturbing signs of running out of breath. Fateful words such as failure and impasse have been heard in many statements delivered since the opening of this session. They are a sign of the frustration and disenchantment that is overcoming countries whose commitment to disarmament is being put to a severe test.

Apart from the lethargy of the Conference on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission, and the lamentable failure of the seventh Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the multilateral disarmament process has yet again been damaged by the frustrating outcome of the Review Conference on the Programme of Action on the illicit trade in small arms. This most recent pitfall is significant because it relates to an area that previously benefited from multilateral consensus.

The deadlock in multilateral disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament, is the logical consequence of an international situation that is less and less favourable to progress in the cause of disarmament, where the principles of multilateralism and the promotion of the rule of law no longer seem to enjoy unanimous support.

We are convinced that, in the absence of concrete multilateral action to launch a process leading to realization of the objectives set in conformity with article VI of the NPT, those negative developments seriously compromise the hopes that arose in the positive climate that resulted from the end of the cold war and the important decisions taken at the NPT Review Conferences of 1995 and 2000.

Consequently, we reiterate our legitimate concern at the deadlock, for there has been no implementation whatsoever of even one of the 13 steps agreed upon by all States parties at the sixth Review Conference of the NPT with a view to the complete elimination of their nuclear arsenals. Let us recall that that commitment was firmly supported in the 1996 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, whose tenth anniversary we marked this year.

Pending attainment of that objective, the non-nuclear States are unconditionally entitled to credible and effective security guarantees from the nuclear-weapon States; these must not be open to interpretation. We firmly believe that the complete elimination of those weapons and general and complete disarmament constitute the only option that can benefit future generations. That objective is still within reach, so long as States display political will and so long as we see goodwill and the initiatives to which it leads.

Clearly, that means we must rehabilitate the multilateral framework for negotiation in the area of disarmament. Here, the Conference on Disarmament is

the right place to find comprehensive, lasting solutions to disarmament and non-proliferation issues.

Moreover, we remain convinced that building international peace and security through respect for and the scrupulous implementation of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation commitments necessarily involves a comprehensive, balanced and non-selective approach to the terms of the NPT. That requires a joint international effort to promote technological cooperation and scientific exchanges, in order to ensure that all States have the possibility to use atomic energy for peaceful purposes. Then, those among us who have renounced military use of the atom and have opted to develop its peaceful uses will be convinced that they made the right choice in 1995, when they voted in favour of the unlimited extension of the NPT.

The concept of recognized nuclear-weapon-free zones established on the basis of agreements freely entered into can strengthen international peace and security and also unquestionably contribute to attaining the goal of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. In that respect, we are pleased to note that nuclear-weapon-free zones have been established in Latin America and the Caribbean, in the South Pacific, in Central Asia, in South-East Asia and in Africa.

With regard specifically to Africa, Algeria was among the States that actively contributed to the drafting and adoption of the Treaty of Pelindaba, which it ratified in 1998. We are fully involved in the endeavours and initiatives to promote the prompt implementation of that important instrument.

Moreover, owing to the geographical proximity and close links between Africa and the Middle East, Algeria remains concerned about the absence of progress in creating a similar zone in the Middle East. It is now more necessary than ever, given the present context, that the international community send a strong signal calling upon Israel to comply with international law and remove the main — perhaps the only — obstacle in the way of the achievement of that important goal, and thus contribute to strengthening peace and stability in that particularly turbulent region.

Algeria is resolutely committed to fulfilling all of its obligations under the international instruments to which it is a party. It will spare no effort within the multilateral bodies of the United Nations in supporting and promoting initiatives to revive the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation process. My country's unshakeable commitment to the promotion of international peace and security is a constant factor in its foreign policy and a cardinal principle for our international action to promote dialogue and cooperation and to strengthen security within traditional frameworks of membership and solidarity in the Maghreb, the Mediterranean and Africa.

In that spirit, my country has joined the international community in its efforts to curb the scourge of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, whose destabilizing effects seriously threaten international peace and security, in particular on the African continent.

Moreover, in accordance with its international obligations under the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, in 2005 Algeria completed the destruction of its anti-personnel mine stockpile, six months before the deadline set by the Convention. It also hosted the ceremony for the establishment of the anti-personnel mine observatory.

Before concluding, I would like to wish the Committee every success. It is our hope that its outcome will revive the disarmament process.

Mr. Mine (Japan): First, I thank Committee members for their indulgence in giving us the opportunity to make a further statement. In the light of the increasing need for the First Committee to respond to the realities we face in the international community in an effective and timely manner so that this Committee will not lose its relevance, Japan would like to draw the special attention of all member States to the statement issued yesterday by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea regarding their intention to conduct nuclear testing.

The representative of the Republic of Korea expressed his country's view on that matter a few minutes ago. Japan too expresses its deep concern over the statement of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Should the Democratic People's Republic of Korea conduct a nuclear test, it would pose a great threat to the peace and security not only of Japan but also of the entire region and beyond. At the same time, it would surely constitute a serious challenge to the regime of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

Nuclear testing by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is totally unacceptable. Japan urges the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to exercise maximum restraint and to refrain from conducting any nuclear testing. Japan strongly urges that country to implement faithfully Security Council resolution 1695 (2006), in particular by returning immediately and without precondition to the Six-Party Talks and implementing fully the Joint Statement of the Six-Party Talks of 19 September 2005, in which the Democratic People's Republic of Korea committed itself to abandoning all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programmes and returning to the NPT and to International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards.

Japan requests all member States to monitor closely the development of this matter and to promptly respond to this serious challenge to international peace and security, which the First Committee is tasked to address.

The Chairperson: I would like to remind representatives that we have a very long list of speakers for tomorrow and Friday. That is why it is especially important that we start on time on both days. I intend to start at 10 a.m. sharp. I would also remind delegations of the need to observe the time limit for statements.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.